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ABSTRACT

The popularity of using qualitative, or ethnographic, research methods to improve educational practices is increasing. However, an examination of how research findings are translated into policy is necessary to assess accurately the extent to which this goal can be realized. This paper assesses the efficiency of four strategies for increasing research use in policy making: enlightenment-transfer, engineering-transfer, enlightenment-transaction, and engineering-transaction. "Enlightenment" and "engineering" are labels used to describe basic and applied research design. "Transfer" and "transaction" describe methods of disseminating research information. It can be concluded that qualitative researchers interested in having research incorporated into policy would be best advised to use either of the two transfer strategies and concentrate on improving the kind and form of information they present. Guidelines for researchers for facilitating the incorporation of research into policy are presented. An example of an attempt to direct research to policy makers, illustrating additional difficulties faced by qualitative researchers, is provided. (Author/MK)

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CONSTRUCTING CASE STUDIES ON EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

FOR POLICY MAKERS

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ABSTRACT

The popularity of using qualitative, or ethnographic, research methods to improve educational practices is increasing. However, an examination of how research gets into policy is necessary to assess accurately the extent to which this goal can be realized. This paper assesses the efficiency of four strategies for increasing research use in policy making and identifies the ones most amenable for use by qualitative researchers. After describing these strategies, an example of an attempt to direct research to policy makers is provided. This example reveals additional difficulties qualitative researchers face in the research to policy process.

CONSTRUCTING CASE STUDIES ON EDUCATIONAL CHANGE FOR POLICY MAKERS

The use of participant-observation and qualitative interviewing to study education is rapidly increasing in popularity (Mulhauser, 1977; Rist, 1980). There is a growing sentiment among researchers and sponsors of research alike that the kind of knowledge these methods yield can serve as the base from which to develop improved educational practices. However, at the moment this sentiment springs more from wishful thinking than actual experience.

A long history of debate addresses the issue of how successfully research informs policy decisions. The fact that most who discuss this topic continue to propose ways to improve research utilization attests to the rather limited success so far. The use of qualitative research in education is in danger of becoming no more than a passing fad if too many unfounded and glowing claims are quickly dimmed by the realities of the world of policy making. Thus, it would be useful at this juncture for qualitative researchers to examine the prospects of their research being used by policy makers and to adjust their expectations accordingly.

In this paper we propose to begin such a task. First, we identify four strategies for increasing the use of research (regardless of the methodological approach) in policy making and assess the degree of success these strategies are likely to have. We then select the strategies most available for use by researchers and develop guidelines for making ethnographic research useful to policy makers. Finally, to illustrate the complexity of doing ethnographic research for this audience, we provide an example from our own work.

Strategies for Improving the Use of Research in Policy Making

There are a variety of proposals for increasing the use of research in policy making contained in the research/knowledge utilization literature. These proposals emphasize two themes: the kind of research conducted and the dissemination of research to policy makers. Each theme revolves around a central issue. In this section we describe these issues and use them to identify four basic strategies for improving research use. We then assess the efficiency of these strategies in promoting this end.

The central issue with respect to the kind of research conducted is how the goals of research are defined. This issue most clearly separates basic from applied researchers and engenders the most debate between proponents of the two positions. Basic researchers design studies which seek to complete gaps in or extend theory; applied researchers design studies which seek to provide information for the solution of a specified problem. Weiss (1978) labels the goal of the former kind of research as "enlightenment" and the latter as "engineering" (i.e., the research is "engineered" to address a particular problem). Kerlinger (1977) argues that although basic research does not directly address any specific policy concern, its impact derives from the slow but continuous accumulation of evidence which eventually alters the ways in which policy makers view reality. On the other hand, applied researchers maintain that research directed toward solving specific problems is most likely to meet the information needs of policy makers and thus to weave its way into policy (Schubert, 1980).

Discussions about the dissemination of research focus on the means by which research is communicated to policy makers. Zaltman (1979) identifies

two such modes: (1) "knowledge transfer" which is essentially a one-way communication of research from the producer to the user and (2) "knowledge transaction" which is an active exchange between producers and users about needed research. Knowledge transfer is accomplished primarily through forms of mass media, such as journals, films, or lectures. Proposals related to knowledge transfer emphasize the form and content of the knowledge that is presented as determining the probability of its use by a particular audience (Eisner, 1979; Florio et al., 1979; House, 1979). Knowledge transaction can occur through direct conversations between policy makers and researchers about the design, conduct, and results of studies (Cohen and Garet, 1979; Mulhauser, 1974, 1977; Saks, 1980; Strike, 1979). Such direct interaction is most likely to take place when a study is commissioned by policy makers. Transaction can also be through human intermediaries who help establish research agendas and communicate research findings to policy makers. For example, Sundquist (1978) describes two types of intermediaries: (1) "academic intermediaries" whose responsibility is to synthesize and translate research into useable forms and (2) "research brokers" who locate, compile, and represent findings to policy makers.

These two themes and the issues of enlightenment versus engineering and transfer versus transaction establish four basic strategies for improving the use of research in policy making (See Figure 1): enlightenment-transfer, engineering-transfer, enlightenment-transaction, and engineering-transaction. It should be stressed that these four strategies are ideal types. Some of them are represented in the literature in their "pure" form, while others are not.

Sieber (1972) identifies several planned change strategies and assesses their efficiency in promoting innovations in terms of the effort required to carry them out, their coverage of the population of change targets, and their yield (the number of targets who actually adopt the innovation). The most efficient strategies are defined as those that require minimal effort, enable wide coverage, and have a high yield. A similar analysis can be conducted for the four research utilization strategies. In this case, effort refers to that which researchers must put forth to enact the strategy, the population of targets is policy makers, and yield is the probability that policy makers will take research into account in policy formulation.

Enlightenment-transfer strategies emphasize the one-way communication of basic research. This strategy assumes that policy makers actively seek information (to the extent that they read journals, attend lectures, or watch films) and are able to translate abstract generalizations into specific actions appropriate for concrete situations. The effort to enact this strategy is low because researchers have to do no more than they are accustomed to doing to put the strategy into action: conducting research and writing. Coverage of the population of policy makers is high for two reasons. One is that the use of mass media widens the audience that can be reached, and the other is that because basic research often addresses generic concerns that cut across specific policy fields, it has the potential for use by a variety of policy makers. However, the yield of this strategy is low. Policy makers are subject to considerable time constraints to make decisions. Time constraints interfere with the extent to which information can be processed, especially that which is not

immediately relevant to policy-makers' needs. Without the availability of someone to translate findings into a form which has meaning for a specific situation, it is probable that this function will not be performed. In addition, policy makers receive considerable political pressure from their constituents, special interest groups, and peers to make particular decisions. This pressure often inhibits the use of research even when the application of the research is readily apparent. The combination of low effort, high coverage, and low yield make this strategy only moderately efficient in promoting the use of research.

The use of research focused on a specific problem increases the yield of the engineering-transfer strategy beyond that of enlightenment-transfer. Engineering-transfer assumes that the policy maker is an active information seeker, but the information the policy maker obtains is in a form much more relevant to particular policy issues. However, because the time and political constraints mentioned with the enlightenment-transfer strategy also apply in this case, the yield is only moderate. It is probably the case that the more specific the problem for which information is supplied, the narrower the audience to which it is useful. Thus, problem-focused research somewhat offsets the wide coverage afforded by the use of mass media. As was the case with the previous strategy, effort is low. Thus, the low effort required coupled with the moderate yield and moderate coverage also make this strategy only moderately efficient.

The enlightenment-transaction strategy enables the policy maker to be a less active information seeker. Instead, either the researcher and the policy maker discuss research ahead of the time it may be needed or a research broker brings important findings to the policy-maker's attention.

The effort to enact such a strategy is considerably higher than the transfer strategies. First, not only must researchers perform their usual duties but also they must identify and hold conversations with particular audiences for their research. With basic research these conversations would essentially be lobbying sessions in which researchers attempt to convince policy makers of the relevance of the research to policy issues, such as currently takes place when researchers are called before congressional committees as witnesses. Second, the strategy requires the inclusion of another actor in the research to policy process. Florio et al. (1979) and Weiss (1978) note that a formal arrangement such as this exists only in a few situations at present. Thus, an elaborate network of researchers, brokers, and policy makers would have to be established at national and local levels before this aspect of the enlightenment-transaction strategy could be implemented. The possibility of wide application to a variety of policy areas represented by the use of basic research is more than offset by the limitations imposed by the requirement of face-to-face interaction. Thus, unless a large number of brokers were available, coverage is moderate at best. Increasing the involvement of policy makers in discussions about research and the use of intermediaries has the potential for high yield. However, the time and political pressures mentioned earlier would be no less a factor in this instance. This plus the abstract nature of the research involved reduces the yield to moderate levels. The combination of high effort and only moderate coverage and yield make this strategy less efficient than the first two.

The engineering-transaction strategy incorporates the use of applied research with either researcher-policy maker interaction or broker-policy

maker interaction. Although the broker would perform a similar function as described in the previous strategy, the conversations between researchers and policy makers would likely involve the policy makers' assisting with the design of the research to be conducted, at least in defining the research problem. As a result, this strategy has the best possibility for insuring that research is directly applicable to policy concerns and for having a high yield, even when constraints on the policy maker are taken into account. However, the strategy also has its drawbacks. It would require a high level of effort to be enacted (on the part of both researchers and policy makers), and its coverage would be less than enlightenment-transaction because the research would be relevant to only a very narrow audience. Overall, then, this strategy is no more efficient than enlightenment-transaction and less than the two transfer strategies.

The above analysis, if accurate, produces at least three surprising conclusions. One, although the yield of strategies involving applied research is higher than those involving basic research, their efficiency is not. Consequently, arguments about which kind of research is more likely to be used in policy making take on tempest-in-a-teapot overtones. Two, the strategies which have the highest yield, the transaction strategies, are only moderately efficient. Three, despite all the attention the literature gives to increasing the use of research in policy making, the immediate prospects for achieving this end are modest indeed.

Based on these conclusions, qualitative researchers interested in having their research incorporated into policy would be best advised to use either of the two transfer strategies and concentrate on improving the kind and form of information they present. This recommendation assumes

that the qualitative researcher seeks as broad an impact as possible; given the time-consuming data collection and analysis methods used in qualitative research, these methods are not likely to be very cost-efficient when only a very narrow impact is sought. Of course, opportunities to discuss research with policy makers should not be passed up, but it is unlikely that researchers have the resources to function as brokers. The extent to which this function is performed will depend on the efforts of brokers already in place, such as project monitors at the National Institute of Education, congressional committee planning and analysis staff, or local linking agents. In the long run, radical changes in the structure of knowledge diffusion networks have to be made for research to become a powerful policy tool (Weiss, 1978); however, in the short run, researchers can improve the likelihood of their research being used by focusing on how to present data in a form useable by brokers and policy makers. It is this short-run, moderately efficient strategy that the remainder of this paper elaborates.

Qualitative Research and the Knowledge Needs of Policy Makers

Policy makers receive information from a variety of sources other than research, such as personal experience, constituents, and special interest groups. To compete with these sources, none of which are more intrinsically valuable than others from the perspective of policy makers, qualitative data must successfully meet considerable and often contradictory knowledge needs. In this section we argue that what data are reported and how they are packaged can make at least modest contributions to achieving this end. We conclude the discussion with a list of

guidelines which would seem to make the reporting of qualitative research more suitable for use by policy makers.

An initial caveat is necessary. Much of the literature upon which this discussion is based assumes that the policy-maker is an operative in the federal government. The reader should keep in mind that state school officers, school superintentents, principals, and teachers also have policy responsibilities on less global, although no less significant, problems. For simplicity's sake, this discussion does not attempt to distinguish between policy makers' positions and knowledge needs unique to those positions. However, it is probable that individuals in different organizations and in different positions within those organizations have somewhat varying knowledge needs (Abt Associates, 1978).

Policy makers live in particularly harried worlds. Decisions often must be made before complete information is available, and when it is, there is time to digest only the most terse presentations of it. To improve the likelihood that research will be used, Weiss (1978: 69) suggests simply writing better as one way: "The classic injunctions are: start a report with a brief summary of the results, avoid jargon, write graceful prose, use charts, maps, and other attractive graphics, interpret the meaning of statistical statements, and write in terms that have meaning to the policy audience." These same themes of brevity and increased clarity are commonly found in other discussions of policy makers' knowledge needs (Florio et al., 1979; Strike, 1979).

The reporting of qualitative research is more successful at being clear than it is brief. Primarily because qualitative data require fewer esoteric analysis strategies, their presentation does not rely on technical

explanations that a lay audience cannot understand intuitively. However, involved theoretical explanations and elaborations also pose obstacles to the clarity of a research report. This does not mean that research for policy use should be atheoretical but rather that most policy makers do not need to follow the intellectual history of a study to make use of its findings.

Ethnographies and case studies are notorius for their length. This is mostly a function of the researcher's attempt to provide a holistic representation and/or interpretation of a large chunk of reality. However, long reports hinder a policy maker's use of it. To attain brevity Mulhauser (1974) suggests that the researcher focus on a smaller segment of reality to explore holistically. As an alternative, the case study authors in Herriott and Gross (1979) selectively pursue specific themes within a particular realm of reality. Either method can effectively reduce the researcher's output and does not seem too contradictory to any standards of practice in qualitative research.

Policy makers seem more likely to use research if it addresses the specific problems for which they seek solutions. Although the problems school personnel face are typically more limited than those of occupants of regional and national positions, Mulhauser (1974) argues that rarely do any policy makers make comprehensive decisions. Thus, to be useful research should address relatively circumscribed problems that fit with current and anticipated policy concerns. This issue of defining the goals of research is the one which most clearly separates basic from applied educational researchers and engenders the most vehement debate. However, what proponents of either viewpoint frequently overlook is that the issue

of tailoring research to an audience is as much a problem of research reporting as it is research definition. Researchers of either kind can select which data they choose to report to a particular audience depending upon the concerns of that audience.

Not only do policy makers need information which directly addresses their policy areas but also they need information grounded in the contexts of the situations for which they make policy (Sundquist, 1978). Schubert (1980: 20) argues that "The subject matter of inquiry must include specifics, information that cannot be generalized to other situations but is essential for moving toward desirable personnel and social resolutions of problems in the situation at hand." In other words, information on specific problems in specific settings is more easily translated into action than abstracted generalizations. Qualitative research is particularly suited to provide this kind of knowledge because it is able to yield detailed narratives of events which convey their intracacies and meanings to research users (Eisner, 1979; House, 1979; Schubert, 1980).

Weiss (1978) and Florio et al. (1979) discuss a knowledge need somewhat antithetical to the above: the need for syntheses of findings. In other words, at the same time that policy makers require information on specific contexts, they also need information about the consistency of the findings. The combined weight of findings from several studies or a single study of several contexts is more compelling that findings of a single study of a single context, especially since the policy maker is probably unaware of related studies which support or contradict a piece of research. This need can be fulfilled partially by research brokers who compile reviews of the literature on particular topics. Qualitative

researchers can help in two ways: by comparing their findings to those of similar studies and by engaging in studies of multiple sites such as described in Herriott and Gross (1979) or Crain (1968). The former way places the research in the context of a larger frame of reference; the latter enables the researcher to retain the ability to focus on the dynamics of concrete situations while at the same time increasing the power of the findings. As Rist (1980: 9) notes, "Combining detailed analysis with the generalized ability available from multiple sites is an important advance and one those in the policy arena have been quick to capitalize upon."

Finally, policy makers are most interested in research which leads easily to specific, unambiguous recommendations for action (Weiss, 1978; Florio et al., 1979). This is perhaps the most difficult need for qualitative research to meet. Detailed data from complex situations do not easily lend themselves to simple interpretations. The problem of translating such research into action is compounded when the results are from a single setting, and thus, differences in settings which may affect these actions are not known. The use of multiple sites would seem to lessen the ambiguity some by enabling researchers to specify better the conditions under which particular events are likely to lead to other events. In addition, narrowing the focus of the data reported would reduce the number of contingencies which a conclusion would have to address. Simplifying conclusions may be distasteful to researchers who pride themselves on developing elaborate explanations of complex phenomena, but the policy maker is forced to be less concerned with developing a broad understanding

of such phenomena than with making the most reasonable decision possible given the time constraints within which the decision has to be made.

Based on the above discussion, qualitative research does not seem inherently incompatible with the knowledge needs of policy makers. Indeed, in several instances, the kind of data such research yields seems to be particularly valuable. The bulk of the incompatibility resides in how the data are reported. To alleviate some of this incompatibility, we propose the following guidelines for determining what kinds of data to report and how to report them for policy use:

- match the focus of the data reported to the concerns of particular policy makers (as much as possible bring policy makers into discussions about what their concerns are).
- Provide descriptions of the interplay of variables affecting an event, but only if they properly fall within this focus.
- be as brief as possible, and avoid detailed technical discussions (e.g., methodological, statistical, or theoretical) to improve the clarity of the report to lay audiences.
- compare the findings to those yielded by similar studies.
- draw conclusions which are most directly related to establishing appropriate courses of action.
- when possible, use a multiple site approach rather than a single case study.

It is perhaps presumptuous to suggest guidelines in an area of research noted for its lack of conformity to any conventions in its communication of results (Lofland, 1974). However, at the risk of appearing

even more presumptuous, what follows is a description of an attempt to take some of these guidelines into account in a qualitative study of school change.

Constructing a Case Study for Policy Makers

Miles (1979) observes that the literature on qualitative research methods gives infrequent attention to descriptions of what field workers do with their data once collected. To remedy this oversight somewhat, we provide an example of an attempt to enact the enlightenment-transfer strategy. The example is from our work in Research for Better Schools' (RBS) Field Studies Component using ethnographic or qualitative methods to examine factors that promote intentional improvement of schools. We will describe the research and its intended audiences, the design and analysis strategies, the reporting structure, and the extent to which we met the criteria described above.

The Research Project

Since 1978, the three components of RBS' Development Division have been developing approaches that agencies such as state departments of education, public educational service agencies (ESAs), or private consulting firms could use to help schools improve specific curriculum programs. These approaches consist of materials and procedures that an external "linking agent" can use, with a school's assistance, to diagnose problems and to design customized innovations. Because of the failure of previous federal policies designed to promote reform through curriculum development and diffusion (Welch, 1979), the approaches are intended to address

the general policy question of what voluntary means can be used to promote school reform.

After initial internal development, the components began trying out the approaches by offering its assistance, through linking agents, to schools. Long-term relationships were established with 12 schools and one district (where three schools were involved). RBS' Field Studies Component had the task of studying the change process as it occurred at 11 of the sites. The objectives of this research were:

- To understand the dynamic process of change at the local level (as this process takes place when a school works with an outside agency).
- To understand the characteristics of schools that can facilitate or hinder the change process.
- To understand the characteristics of an external agency (in this case, the RBS component groups) that can facilitate or hinder the process.
- To identify the outcomes of the process.

(Field Studies, 1979: 26)

To meet these research objectives, ethnographic techniques were used. Heaviest emphasis was placed on direct, nonparticipant observation of events taking place in the schools and informal interviewing of participants.

The research was designed to serve the needs of a variety of audiences which included other researchers, decision makers within RBS, staff of agencies providing assistance to schools, and federal policy makers. Because of the wide range of knowledge needs represented in this list,

matching the focus of the data to the concerns of particular policy makers was particularly problematic. For example, consider the problems in providing information just to a single organization, RBS. At least the individuals involved and their concerns were known, but these concerns were very diverse. The Executive Director and corporate management team wanted information that would guide decisions about the general direction of the corporation, component directors sought information that would help them finely tune their approaches, and linkers wanted assistance in working with individual sites more effectively. Moreover, individuals at each level believed that the Field Studies reports would be used by policy makers in and out of RBS to make decisions that would affect the continuation of their activity.

Outside the corporation, the needs of policy makers were even more diverse. This diversity might have been reduced somewhat if the policy issues to be addressed were content specific--i.e., how to improve basic skills instruction or career preparation programs. However, the research addressed a policy issue of interest across many areas: How does one assist the change process? Hence, it was very difficult to focus on specific concerns of any one group.

Design and Analysis

While the ability to address specific policy concerns was limited by the number of audiences, several factors helped to avoid two problems that inhibit policy makers' use of research associated with many ethnographic studies: the single site approach and the emphasis on holistic description of a large piece of reality. For instance, the components

worked in a number of locations, and this forced us to adopt a multi-site design. The number of sites reduced our ability to do the holistic, in-depth description associated with ethnographic research. Instead, we opted to focus on more specific problems within the sites. The structure of the components' work and our research problems provided ways to determine where to observe and what questions to ask. In working with a school, each component formed a local planning team which would meet with the linker and follow the procedures that were brought from RBS. Since most of the "change process" took place within these teams, they were the focus of observation; most interviewing was with team members and RBS linkers. At various times we also looked at the social organization of the school, the nature of the approaches, and the role of the RBS linkers, but always to determine how they facilitated or impeded the change effort. In this case, a problem focus replaced the goal of holistic description as a criterion guiding data collection.

For some qualitative researchers, the case study is the ultimate ethnographic analysis. We made use of this mode, but it was supplemented by intentional efforts to use qualitative materials to make cross-site comparisons. The case studies were intended to provide both researchers and audiences with a "feel" for the events being analyzed. Essentially the cases were to perform this function in three ways. First, they would provide an understanding of the process of change, the sequences of events, and the extent to which those events were patterned. Second, they would promote an understanding of the contexts within which that process occurred, especially in the schools. Third, they would help identify the meanings various participants attached to the contexts and process.

Because case studies of all eleven sites would have been tedious to read or write, only three were written. To keep them within manageable size limits, a set of guidelines was developed to focus the studies. Each case was written by the field worker for the site, and a common outline was followed. This outline had five parts: an introduction providing background on the site, a recruitment section describing how the site was selected, a description of the change process at the site, a description of the outcomes of the process, and conclusions that could be drawn from the site. All case studies were less than 10 pages long.

In our analysis, the case studies were used in conjunction with an examination of relationships among variables across all eleven sites. The cross-site analysis was guided by field work which identified a number of outcomes of interest and "hunches" about characteristics of the process and the school context that might affect those outcomes. All field data from each site were reviewed, and an effort was made to rate each site on "variables" derived from the hunches. Once the rating was completed, simple bi-variate cross-tabulations were run to see if process or context characteristics were associated with outcomes.

This simple approach proved quite powerful. Some of our initial hunches were disconfirmed. However, some of the conclusions from the case studies were supported and, as a result, were shown to be of broader generalizability than single cases would have suggested. Thus, the case study data suggested variables for the cross-site analysis, captured the complexity of events at the sites, and, in some cases, indicated why there were certain relationships between variables; reciprocally, the cross-site

analysis helped indicate that findings from the case studies were not flukes.

Reporting

Perhaps the most important aspect of our reporting strategy was that a variety of reports were written. Somewhat different strategies were used for internal and external audiences.

The internal strategy was governed by the requirement that we share reports with the components to ensure factual correctness and the belief that most people at RBS would not read more than one report from us. As a result, we produced a single report summarizing our findings. This report included a literature review that was a combination of a review of theories relevant to our problem and findings of similar studies. It also had two features that were not included in later reports: a moderately detailed description of the approaches followed by each component and a set of recommendations. External reviewers of the report argued that the approaches were similar enough that a detailed analysis would not interest outside readers, but it was of use to RBS' management team.

In addition to a written report, Field Studies made itself available for discussion of the report. For instance, the Field Studies Coordinator attended a meeting to discuss the implications of the report for future directions of the corporation. Here his role was limited to answering questions and providing clarification. The effort to apply findings and descriptions to corporate issues was made by top managers.

Externally, three different reports were prepared. The first report was a 119 page report of all data and analyses (Firestone and Corbett,

1979). While this report was geared mostly to researchers, it was sent to project monitors in Washington. Since these monitors were supposed to act as brokers between researchers and policy makers, we hoped the work would enter the stream of studies synthesized for policy makers.

The second report was 30 pages long. It identified a central policy issue to which the study was relevant: the usefulness of linking agents in promoting change and factors that can limit such usefulness (Firestone and Corbett, 1980). This report was directed to both researchers and policy makers although the primary dissemination channels likely led it to researchers (e.g., a reading at an educational research conference, a presentation to members of dissemination of research projects, and submission to a journal that we believed was read by some policy makers as well as researchers).

Finally, and perhaps most important, a two-page report in the form of a press-release was written by the corporation's public relations office. This release summarized the findings without presenting any data. It was sent to linkers and program managers in state capacity-building programs around the country.

One problem facing researchers who wish to see their research incorporated into policy decisions is the lack of clear indications of such use. Certainly, we received no such evidence. However, we can assess the probability of our success by determining how close we came to meeting the guidelines for reporting qualitative research identified above.

- Match the focus of the data reported to the concerns of particular policy makers.

Our conscious effort to produce a variety of reports and include different materials for internal and external audiences was an important step in the right direction, but the plethora of policy-making audiences we could address and our interest in writing for researchers as well as policy makers limited our effectiveness. In addition the dissemination channels needed to reach the two audiences were probably very different. We were much more familiar with ways to reach researchers.

- Provide descriptions of the interplay of variables affecting an event only if they properly fall within this focus. The decisions to write short case studies, to leave the case studies out of shorter reports, and to gear all data presentations to a problem of interest to policy makers led to parsimonious description. However, with the exception of the press release, it is doubtful that policy makers read the descriptions provided. Research brokers, however, probably did.

- Be as brief as possible and avoid technical discussions. In the longer paper, we did present a literature review. This was not exceptionally theoretical or abtruse, but it did identify precursors to our effort. Even this was probably a too lengthy approach to setting the context for the research.

- Compare the findings to those yielded by similar studies.

  Except where we described precursors and discrepancies in findings which led to our research effort, we did not compare our findings with those of others. To be most useful, such a comparison should have come when our findings were presented.

- Draw conclusions which are most directly related to establishing appropriate courses of action.

  This guideline was followed most closely in the draft report shared with RBS where recommendations for action were made. Elsewhere it seemed inappropriate because of the plethora of audiences to be addressed and limited knowledge about them.

- When possible, use a multiple site approach.

  The reports were based on research conducted in 11 sites.

This summary suggests that our success was mixed. We probably advanced over many ethnographic studies in our use of several sites and our ability to limit and focus our descriptions. However, we were not as successful in tying reports directly to specific policy audiences or in locating the proper dissemination channels to reach those audiences.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we established a typology of strategies for improving the use of research in policy making. The typology was based on two themes current in the research/knowledge utilization literature: the kind of research conducted for policy makers and the dissemination of

research to this audience. After examining the efficiency of these strategies, we concluded that researchers are not likely to achieve more than modest progress toward this end. Of the strategies available to them, the ones which are the most efficient are knowledge transfer strategies which emphasize matching the data reported through mass media to the information needs of particular audiences. We identified a set of guidelines for qualitative researchers to use to improve this match and provided an example of an attempt to follow the guidelines. The discussion of this example revealed additional difficulties inherent in the research-to-policy process.

Although we predict modest success for the use of research in policy formulation, this state of affairs should not necessarily discourage researchers. The world of policy making is complex and, as Weiss (1978) notes, most of the resistance to research use derives from the interplay of forces within this realm. The fact that researchers can make moderate contributions actually should be somewhat heartening. Perhaps the most important injunction that can be offered qualitative researchers is to learn more about the policy-making world. Not only can such knowledge improve the kind of reports written but also it can suggest when in the policy-making cycle research will be most useful, to whom the research should be directed, and what are the appropriate dissemination channels. Currently expectations are high for the potential of qualitative methods to have an impact on education. Without careful consideration of how research gets into policy, the chances for even minimal success in meeting these expectations are small.

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Research Goal \ Dissemination Mode	Transfer	Transaction
Enlightenment	Efficiency: Moderate Effort: Low Coverage: High Yield: Low	Efficiency: Moderate Effort: Low Coverage: Moderate Yield: Moderate
Engineering	Efficiency: Moderate Effort: Low Coverage: Moderate Yield: Moderate	Efficiency: Moderate Effort: High Coverage: Low Yield: High

Figure 1: Four Strategies for Improving Research Use in Policy Making